



Volunteer Monitoring: Considerations for Wetland Assessment

Montana Watercourse
Karen Filipovich
kfilipovich@montana.edu

What is a Volunteer?



Volunteer Considerations for Wetland Assessment Purposes

- Scientific Level
- Ability to Travel
- Physical Capabilities
- Knowledge of Area
- Interest in Area
- Interest in Objectives
- **Enthusiasm**

Volunteer Monitoring Objectives

- General education on wetlands
- Stronger links to local area
- Increase local capacity to understand and protect wetlands
- Provide basic indicators of wetland health
- Provide trend data
- Provide site intensive data
- Evaluate effectiveness of BMPs.

The Minnesota Wetland Health Evaluation Project (WHEP)

Objectives:

- Provide Wetland Health Ratings for 11 cities in 2 counties in Minnesota
- Note any changes in vegetation or aquatic indices over time.
- Evaluation of BMP installation

WHEP: Volunteers

Criteria:

- Any skill level initially.
- Enthusiasm
- Prefer volunteers to be close to work or home.
- WHEP provides training and equipment.



WHEP: Design

- Background information supplied by City
- Intensive Site Vegetative and Invertebrate Surveys
 - 100m-sq. releve plot in which all plants are ID'd to genus level.
 - Invertebrates collected with six bottle traps and one dip-netting sample (2). ID'd to genera.
 - Evaluation metrics designed by MPCA.
 - Citizen spot checks.
 - Technical checks on 10%.
 - Error catching methods for forms.

WHEP: Training and Resources

- **Training:**
 - Three field and laboratory sessions offered every year.
 - Citizen “teams” where several are trained each year.
- **Resources:**
 - Two wetland monitoring coordinator/trainers.
 - Initial tool and modifications developed by MPCA.
 - Funding from EPA, Minnesota Legislature, and participating cities.

WHEP: Results

- Seven years of data collected.
- 50 wetland sites sampled in 2003.
- 135 wetlands evaluated since 1997.
- Evaluation of BMP installation at Cedar Pond in Egan.
- Trends and comparisons between cities.
- Cadre of educated Citizen Monitors who know local wetlands and are engaged in community.

What does it take to run a volunteer program?

Design Considerations

- WHY monitoring
- HOW and WHEN to monitor
- WHAT parameters
- WHAT protocols
- Data quality objectives

Organizational Considerations

- TRAINING
- SUPPORT
- SUPERVISION

What Objectives are Appropriate for Montana?

- Wetland Health
- Flags
- Trends
- Effectiveness

Next Steps in Montana

- Evaluation of Summer Work
- Determination of Objectives of Monitoring
- Development of a Pilot for Gallatin Valley
- Evaluation and Modification/Expansion of Volunteer Efforts